

## King Rail *Rallus elegans*

**Habitat Preference:** Wetland and grassland complexes; especially found in the sedge-meadow zone at the edges of marshes.



### Threats:

- Started to disappear in the 1960's and 1970's.
- Crustaceans and aquatic insects that King Rails feed upon are severely affected by pesticides.
- The sedge-meadow zone that this species occupies is especially susceptible to draining and habitat alteration practices.
- Something may have gone wrong at King Rail wintering grounds because nest habitat for this bird has increased since the decline started in the 1960's.

### Practice Guidelines:

- Restore Wetlands:
  - Re-establish large wetland complexes.
  - Too many cattails will deter consistent use of an area.
  - Re-establish the sedge-meadow component of marsh habitat with plantings.
- Upland Restorations:
  - Re-establish grassland/prairie in the area surrounding marshes.
- Water Level Manipulations:
  - Maintain stable water levels during summer to increase nesting success.
  - In Iowa king rails prefer to nest where water levels are 4 to 18 inches deep.
  - Maintain specific water level to encourage sedges and specific plants that provide seed and support insect life for food.
- Eliminate use of pesticides (as much as possible) where this species occurs, and encourage crayfish and aquatic insects to inhabit marshes.